

Explosives ordnance disposal team chief Staff Sgt. Samuel McCallister, wearing a protective suit, approaches a backpack full of pipe bombs during training.



An F6A remote disposal robot approaches a simulated bomb.



The robot uses its high-tech arm, which has a television camera and sensors, to pick up the simulated bomb.

Battling with BOMBS

Life on the edge gives EOD Airmen pride

by Staff Sgt. Matthew Rosine, photos by Tech. Sgt. Larry Simmons

Staff Sgt. Joseph Deslauriers' adrenaline erupts like a volcano. Burning through his veins, it races faster with each pump of his heart. This is no fake Hollywood movie with its red wire versus blue wire. This is real-world Air Force explosive ordnance disposal.

It doesn't matter that it's 120 searing degrees or that home is thousands of miles and six months away. And it doesn't matter this bomb could ex-

plode at any time. What matters is that American lives hang in the balance if the sergeant doesn't do his job — or fails.

The sergeant must be successful — the first time. "We have the saying: 'Initial success or total failure,'" said Sergeant Deslauriers, an EOD robotics NCO with the 1st Special Operations Civil Engineer Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla. "We have to stay up on (everything) trying to defeat whatever they throw at us."

"This is an IED (improvised explosive device) war," said the sergeant from Bellingham, Mass, who earned a Bronze Star in Iraq. "It's us against the terrorists."

Whether dealing with IEDs, presidential escort duties, grenades found by local police or disarming a vest on a suicide bomber in Iraq, the Airmen are well prepared to handle the situation.

"Being in the military, in general, is dangerous. But that's especially true in EOD," equipment specialist Airman 1st Class Brian Dunnagan said. "You tell people your main job is to disarm bombs and they always think that you've got a screw loose. But, if you're trained right, the job is not that dangerous."

Plus, the Airmen have a host of gadgets to help them do their job that helps keep them from harm's way. They use robots and other devices. And while the training may be as rigorous as the job itself, the battlefield Airmen take pride in knowing each day that they save American lives and disarm terrorism.

Each real mission is fraught with danger. But the well-prepared experts get plenty of satisfaction from the work they do, the Airman from Kankakee, Ill., said. EOD Airmen take pride in knowing people depend on them to do the job right the first time.

"It's (pride) nothing we have to look for," Airman Dunnagan said.

"We already have it in ourselves (pride) from everything we do," he said.



Far from harm's way, Staff Sgt. Joseph Deslauriers navigates his robot to pick up a simulated bomb during training. The robot takes the bomb to a secure place for demolition.

